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URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT:
Lancaster Street Property

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Prepared for:

Bulfinch Development Corporation

Prepared by:

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January 1986

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Introduction

In an age where developers and architects routinely build environments in many regions across the nation and around the world according to interchangeable and expedient formulas, the qualities of a location that make it unique and constitute its identity are not well understood, or are overlooked altogether. The results are environments, both urban and suburban, that look and operate increasingly the same despite differing climatic, cultural, historical, formal and economic regional conditions. It is with the conviction that this phenomenon should be opposed in order to maintain the identity of places, whether of a region, a city, or a district, that this report was commissioned.

The subject of this report is an 18,000 square foot property controlled by the Bulfinch Development Corporation, in Boston's Bulfinch Triangle, which is currently under consideration for designation as an historic district. In an effort to better understand the Bulfinch Triangle, an architecture and urban design firm with considerable experience working in historic districts, Lane, Frenchman and Associates, was asked by the owners to analyze the district and identify the qualities of form and structure which give it its identity. From this analysis criteria were formulated to guide and inform the design of a new building to be appropirate for its context and to achieve a high degree of architectural quality.

To achieve the goals of the owners regarding contextural compatibility requires a re-ordering of the priorities and governing values of mainstream, present-day development. The kind of building the owners want to avoid and concerned city agencies seek to prevent are based on values and assumptions which prioritize the expedient requirements of corporate organization and structural and mechanical economy over human requirements for scale, texture, esthetic quality,

light, ventilation and psychological identity. The latter set of values were the priority of the better urban buildings built in Boston prior to World War II, including the Bulfinch Triangle, and informed the design of both the inside of a building and the "public rooms" that are the streets and open spaces of a city. Therefore these values must be re-established as priorities if a new building is to be compatible with this historic district.

Aside from the issue of values and priorities, buildings which are considered problematic reflect a lack of understanding of the conventions of urban building, which were all but taken for granted before the proliferation of the International style during the 1950's. It is the task of this report to present the urban and architectural design conventions relevant to new construction in the Bulfinch Triangle and to recommend effective strategies to reconcile the particular characteristics of the district and the owner's needs in a new, high quality building.

A brief synopsis outlines the major sections of this report:

- Fitting the New in with the Old -- articulates and clarifies the fundamental issues that must be addressed for a building to fit-in with an historic district and to be responsive to human dimensions and needs internally and externally. Good and bad examples are discussed to illustrate important points.

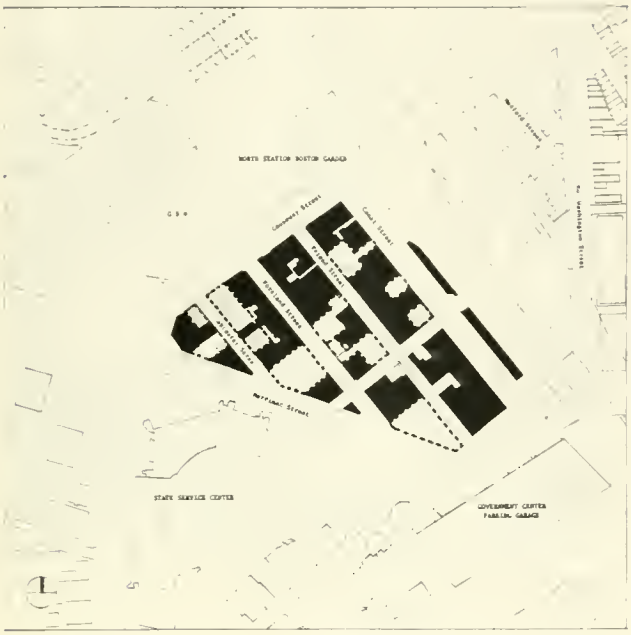
- Organization and Urban Structure -- presents the functional and formal attributes of the district as a whole which contribute to its identity and allow it to operate in a characteristic way.

- Characteristics of the Parts: Elements and Composition -- discusses conventions of massing, composition and

use of materials as a framework for the building's individual expression.

- Design Criteria -- distill from the preceeding sections clear-cut parameters and relate them to the requirements of the actual Lancaster Street site. A site organization and three diagrammatic massing strategies are presented. This is done to demonstrate how the analysis and criteria evolve into appropriate partis for a building.

Fitting the New in with the Old



Bulfinch Triangle Historic District (proposed)

- Buildings contributing to the character of the district
- Buildings not contributing
- Likely sites for infill development

In the Bulfinch Triangle, a district being considered for placement on the National Register of Historic Places, there are numerous underutilized or vacant parcels which will likely be developed in the near future. This situation inevitably raises important issues of how the new will relate with the old.

When a new building must be built in an older established district such as the Bulfinch Triangle, the issue of how the new structure will "fit in" with the district becomes the concern of architects, developers, city officials, and community groups. Often these concerned individuals and groups emphasize stylistic concerns over the more fundamental issues of scale, massing, and proportion as criteria for "fitting in". But it is essential to understand that it is these fundamental aspects of a building as they relate to the size of the human body and to other buildings that hold a district together and give it its particular character.

Styles vary from designer to designer and change from era to era. The variety of building styles which have accrued over time enhance the visual richness of a district and mark the vicissitudes of history. But the constants remain the dimensions of the human body and the formal and organizational characteristics of important existing buildings. It is to these constants that the issue of fitting-in should be addressed. Architectural quality is also an issue which is important if a new building is to fit in with a district of handsome and distinguished structures. Style becomes subordinate to the integrity and skill with which materials and details are handled.

Red Lion Row, Washington, D.C.

In the Bulfinch Triangle there is sufficient diversity of style (Beaux Arts, Richardsonian Romanesque, Victorian) to justify some invention. But when invention, coupled with the larger building footprints typical of modern urban development, fail to come to terms with scale, massing, and proportion as related to other buildings in the district, very unfortunate projects result. Some of these have been sufficiently inappropriate to cause public officials and concerned preservationists to attempt to stop new projects in an effort to minimize such risks. This sort of overreaction is seldom healthy for a community. What is actually needed is appropriate design and a clear set of criteria to judge the merits of new construction. Some examples are discussed below, identifying positive and negative features of each.

In Washington, D.C., Red Lion Row, a project developed by George Washington University, fails dramatically to reconcile the old with the new. A new building has been grafted onto a row of townhouses in an attempt to preserve them. However, its designers did not break the new building's massing into differentiated pieces, a design move which would have been necessary for the new building to fit in with the scale of the existing buildings on the block. The use of strip windows and a prefabricated panel system prevent the building from expressing any relationship to the human body in terms of material, texture, and user needs for opacity, translucency, transparency, and ventilation in the building's envelope. The horizontal strips also disrupt the rhythm of bays along the street and fail to differentiate parts of the building which touch the ground and which touch the sky.

One Exeter Place, Boston, MA

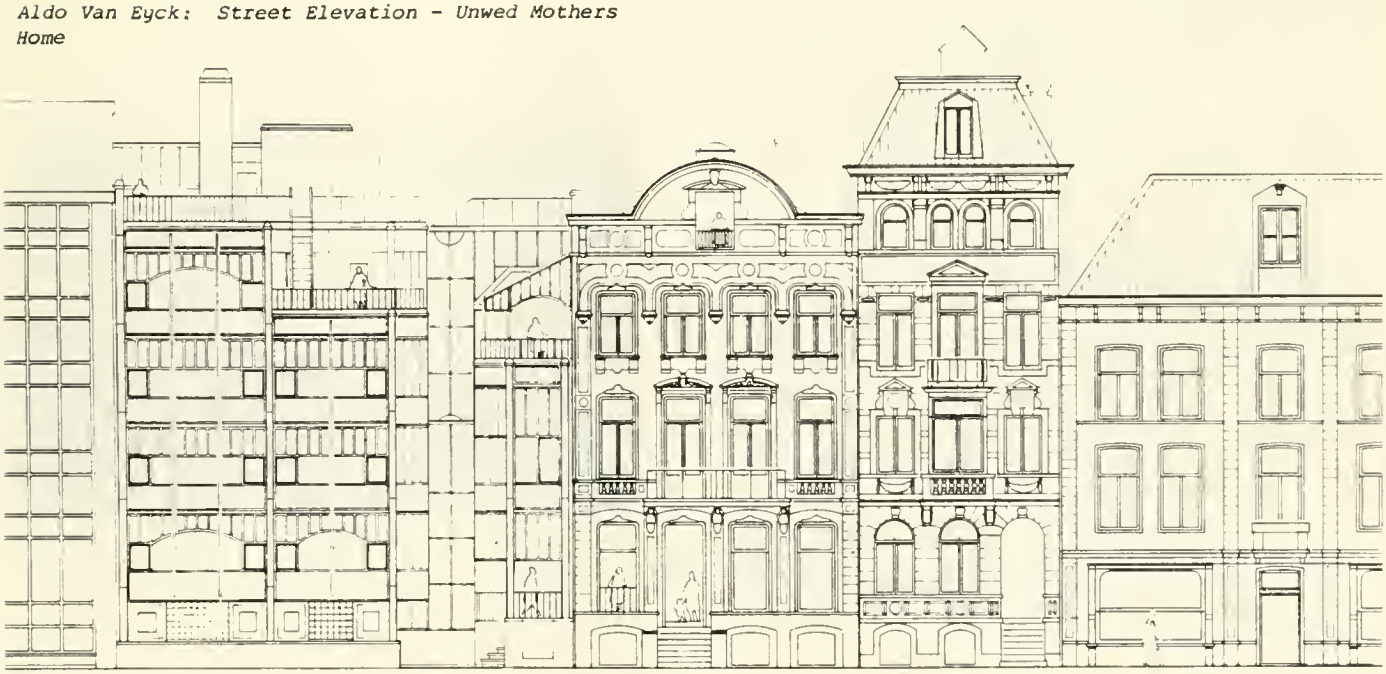
In Boston, One Exeter Place on Boylston Street is an example of a building that is unresponsive to issues of scale, proportion, and massing. The overall bulk of the building is exceedingly out of scale with other buildings on the street. There is a lack of detail and material articulation to provide a relationship

Aldo Van Eyck: Unwed Mothers Home, Amsterdam

between the building's parts and the character of the surrounding district. The facade is a confusion of horizontal and vertical elements which fail to unite coherently. This confusion, and the sheer size of the building also serve to disrupt the rhythm of vertical bays along Boylston Street. An attempt is made to disguise the large bulk of the building by using a three story high black glass mansard to "minimize" its height. Unfortunately, this architectural expression exacerbates the alien quality of the building to its district. Finally, a two story sunken lobby along the entire street level disrupts the pattern of retail use along Boylston Street and prevents any kind of street level activity from occuring in the future.

An example of a new building which fits well in an old context is a project in Amsterdam by Aldo Van Eyck. Stylistically the streetscape is highly diverse, with a range of 18th, 19th and 20th century buildings. This quality justifies a more exuberant, modern expression than may be appropriate in the Bulfinch Triangle, but fundamentally this building respects a uniform district building height, a vertical bay rhythm, and tripartite composition, which are characteristic of

Aldo Van Eyck: Street Elevation - Unwed Mothers Home



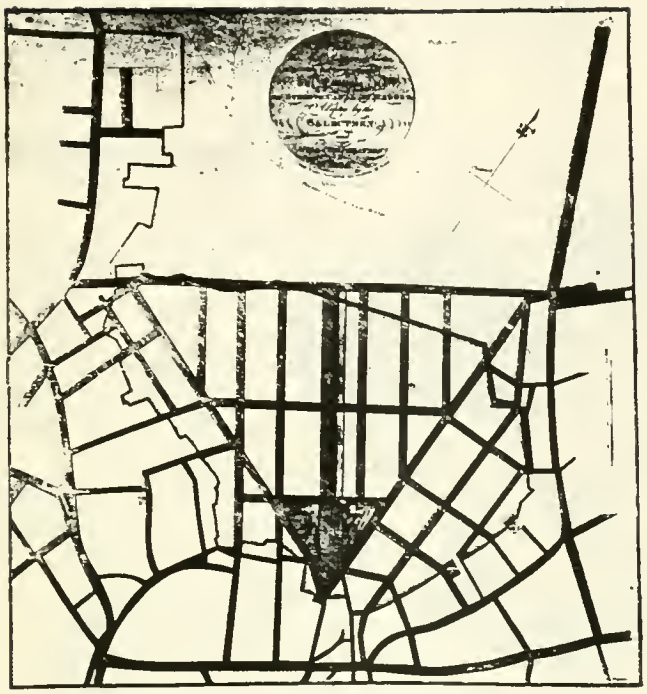
Upper East Side Police and Fire Station.

its particular context. Human dimensions inform the design of the building elements in complex ways both on the interior and exterior of the building. A building is created which fits in and enhances its context without compromising its distinctive architectural identity or denying the needs of its inhabitants.

Another fine example of a new building fitting in with older buildings is Manhattan's new Upper East Side police and fire station. Two existing Romanesque revival buildings were connected by a new five story, granite-clad structure. The new structure is barely visible from the street through a gap between the two existing buildings. The new building material and details are substantially different from those of the existing buildings so that it maintains its own identity while being sympathetic to the patterns of solid and void, range of window and material articulation, and vertical proportions of the existing buildings to form a coherent whole.

The following section of this report will analyze in detail the issues of district organization and building proportion, massing, and scale that must be addressed for a new building to "fit in" with the Bulfinch Triangle district.

Organization and Urban Structure



Bulfinch's plan for the Mill Pond, 1807

This section presents the overall structure of the district. Structure can be understood to be the relationship of various patterns of use, form, and movement which allow a district to operate functionally, and by its particular combination of patterns contribute to its recognizability as a distinct place. Five categories of patterns are discussed here: street pattern, inter-district relationship, use relationships, pedestrian paths, and block structure.

1. Street Pattern

In 1807 Charles Bulfinch laid out a triangular pattern of parallel streets on the filled land of the former Mill Pond. By the end of the nineteenth century, this area bounded by Causeway, Merrimac, North Washington, and Market Streets, became a center for manufacturing and warehousing, mostly in the furniture trade. With additions in the early 20th century, what we know as the Bulfinch Triangle was essentially complete. This street pattern is perhaps the most distinctive characteristic of the district. The clarity of the relatively short, straight, parallel streets is a sharp contrast to the intricacy of the random street pattern of the Hub. These parallel streets, which dead-end into Causeway Street, also accentuate the presence of the GSA building and North Station/Boston Garden as public institutions.

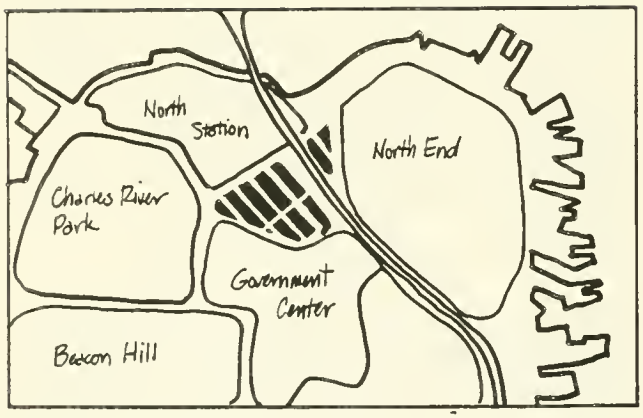
Friend Street looking toward Boston Garden

2. Use Relationships and Identity

The Bulfinch Triangle as an entity has a clear relationship in terms of use and building type with the edges of adjacent districts. The district itself is made up of buildings which share at least a single wall with another building and collectively shape and define streetspace. Such buildings can be called variously street wall, party wall, or fabric buildings. These buildings express themselves publicly through the ordering of solid and void on the streetwall

surface, or facade. These buildings all share certain compositional conventions which relate them to one another. These conventions will be discussed in the Characteristics of the Parts.

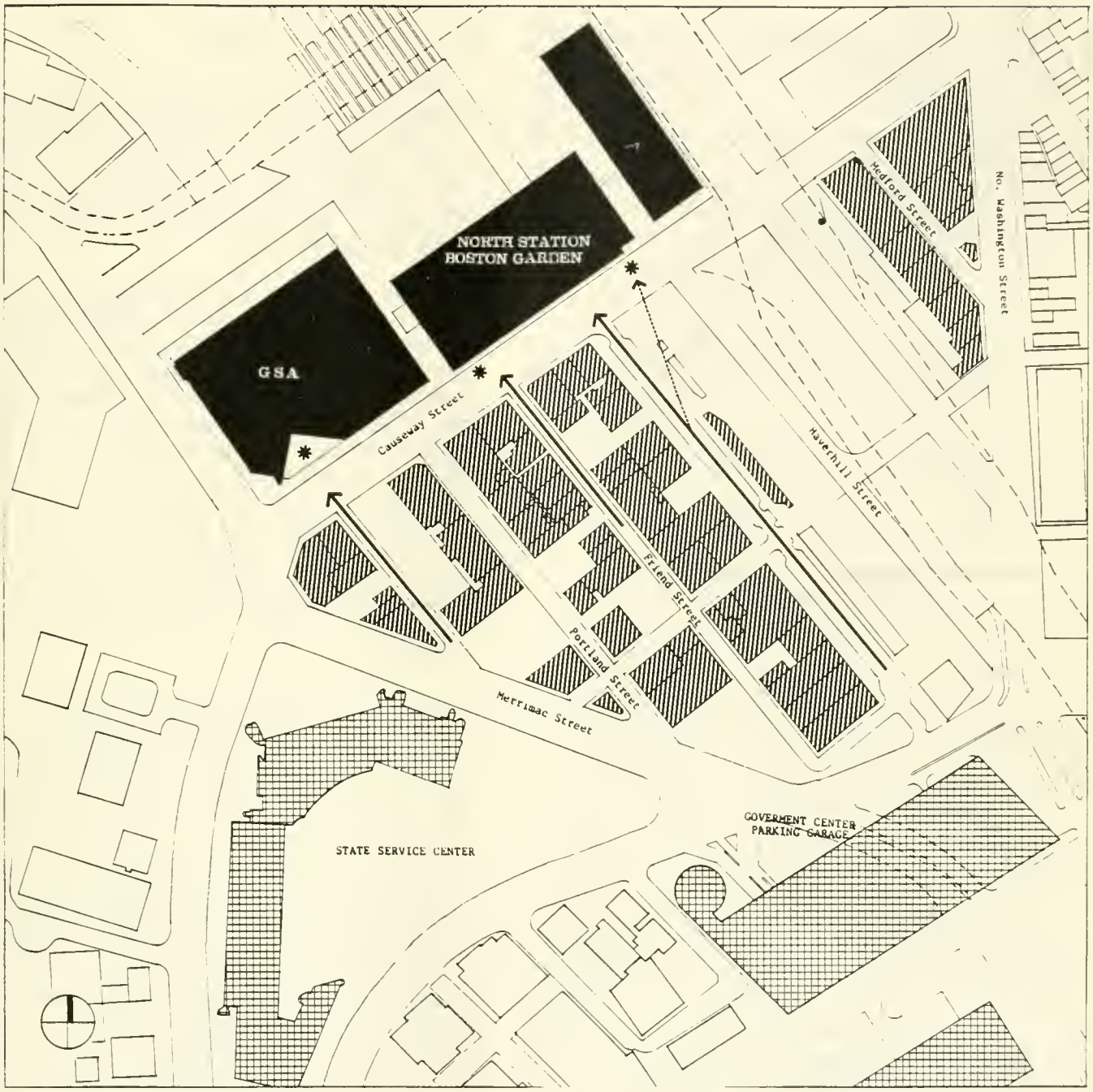
By contrast, the buildings directly across the boundary streets from the Triangle are large scale public institutions: the Government Services Administration Building and North Station/Boston Garden across Causeway Street, the State Service Center across Merrimac Street, and the Government Center parking garage across Market Street. These buildings hold prominent positions in the street system, as a terminus to streets, as in the GSA and North Station/Boston Garden on Causeway Street, as a gateway at a major "Y" intersection, as at the State Service Center, or as a wall building with a "portal" for a major street to pass through, as with the Government Center Garage. These are all free-standing buildings which by their size, public role, and function, address the city or region as a whole and call attention to themselves as focal points from their respective districts and from other districts in the city. They also form distinct edges for the Bulfinch Triangle district.



A district between other districts

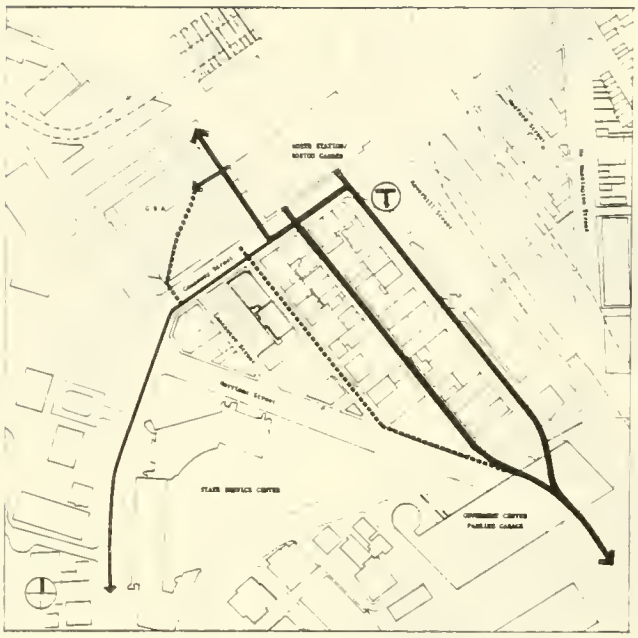
3. A District Between Other Districts

It is the relatively small scale (for a district) and completeness of its rational vision that makes the Triangle read as a small district between larger districts. Four distinct districts bound the Bulfinch Triangle: North Station, the North End, Government Center, and Charles River Park (formerly the West End). This geographic characteristic is what makes this district viable as a new office center, for it has a distinct identity as a destination while serving as a link between other districts.

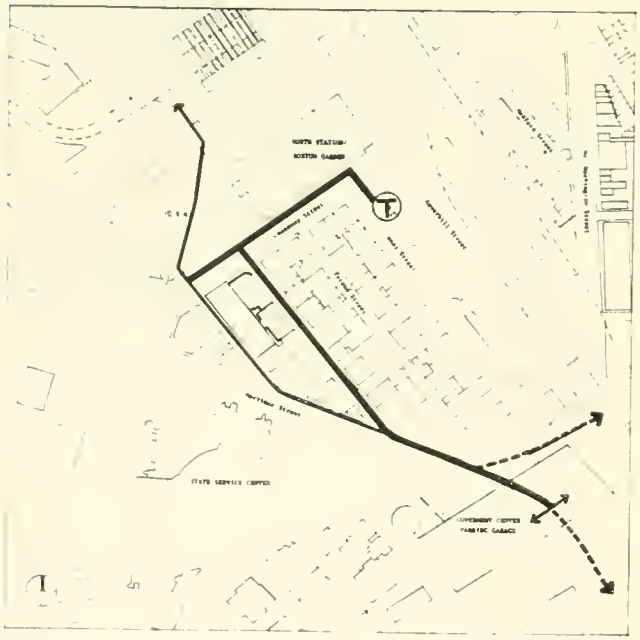


Use Relation and Identity

- Large Public Institutions: Terminus
- Public Institution: Edge
- Focal Point
- Infill Party Wall Buildings
- View to Terminus



North Station: Likely Paths of Commuter Rail Passengers (With New Development)



GSA: Likely Paths

Rush Hour

Lunchtime Extension

4. Pedestrian Paths

Pedestrian activity has an effect on the viability of ground level retail uses and can be influential to organize ground level access to a new building. Sources and destinations of pedestrian traffic and the likely paths between them must be clearly understood.

The three major sources of pedestrian traffic are immediately adjacent to the district: the new GSA building; North Station/Boston Garden; and the Green Line transit stop. Also the proposals for the North Station site will have significant impact on pedestrian traffic. All of these sources will have downtown, Government Center, and Quincy Market as likely noontime and working hours destinations. Because the Bulfinch Triangle is situated between these districts, it will act as a funnel for this traffic towards downtown from North Station.

The existing North Station complex generates substantial pedestrian flows of commuter rail passengers along Canal Street. These flows, predictably, peak at the rush hours. The addition of major office development as proposed at North Station will tend to reinforce the paths travelled presently, with a substantial increase in pedestrian traffic along Friend Street, and extend the periods travelled to include noontime. There would also be increased pedestrian traffic along Causeway Street between the Green Line/Orange Line stop at the corner of Canal Street, and the major access point to the North Station development located midway between between Friend and Portland Streets.

The Government Services Administration building, which is nearing completion, will have major impact on pedestrian traffic at the Lancaster Street property. Its 4,000 employees will certainly be drawn downtown, to Quincy Market or the North End at noontime. At rush hours they will walk along Causeway Street to the Green Line/Orange Line station, or to buses or parking at Haymarket Square under the

Government Center Garage. Since the main entrance to the building is on axis with Lancaster Street, there should be pedestrian traffic along the frontage of the Lancaster Street property. But it is possible (but not certain) that a greater flow will occur along Portland Street due to building and street geometries which may be perceived to minimize travel distance to downtown.

5. Block Structure

Four aspects give a unique character to the block structure of the Bulfinch Triangle district:

1. Diversity of Building Sizes

2. Building Access Patterns

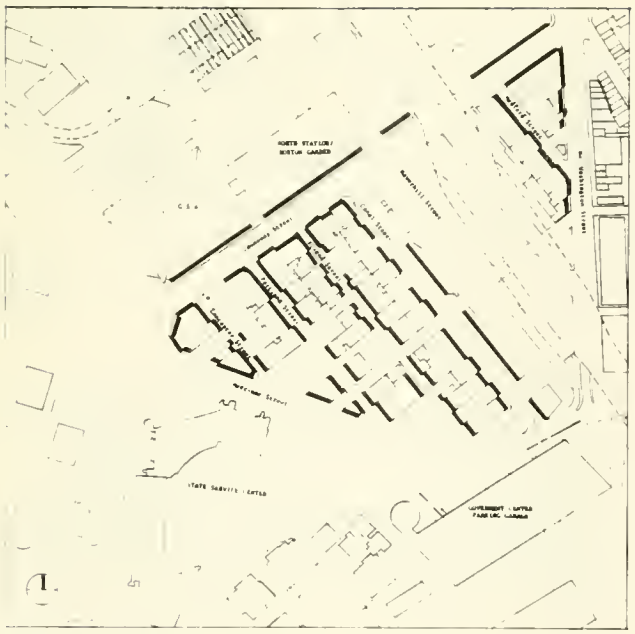
3. Variety of Building Heights

4. Consistent Scale of Building Frontages

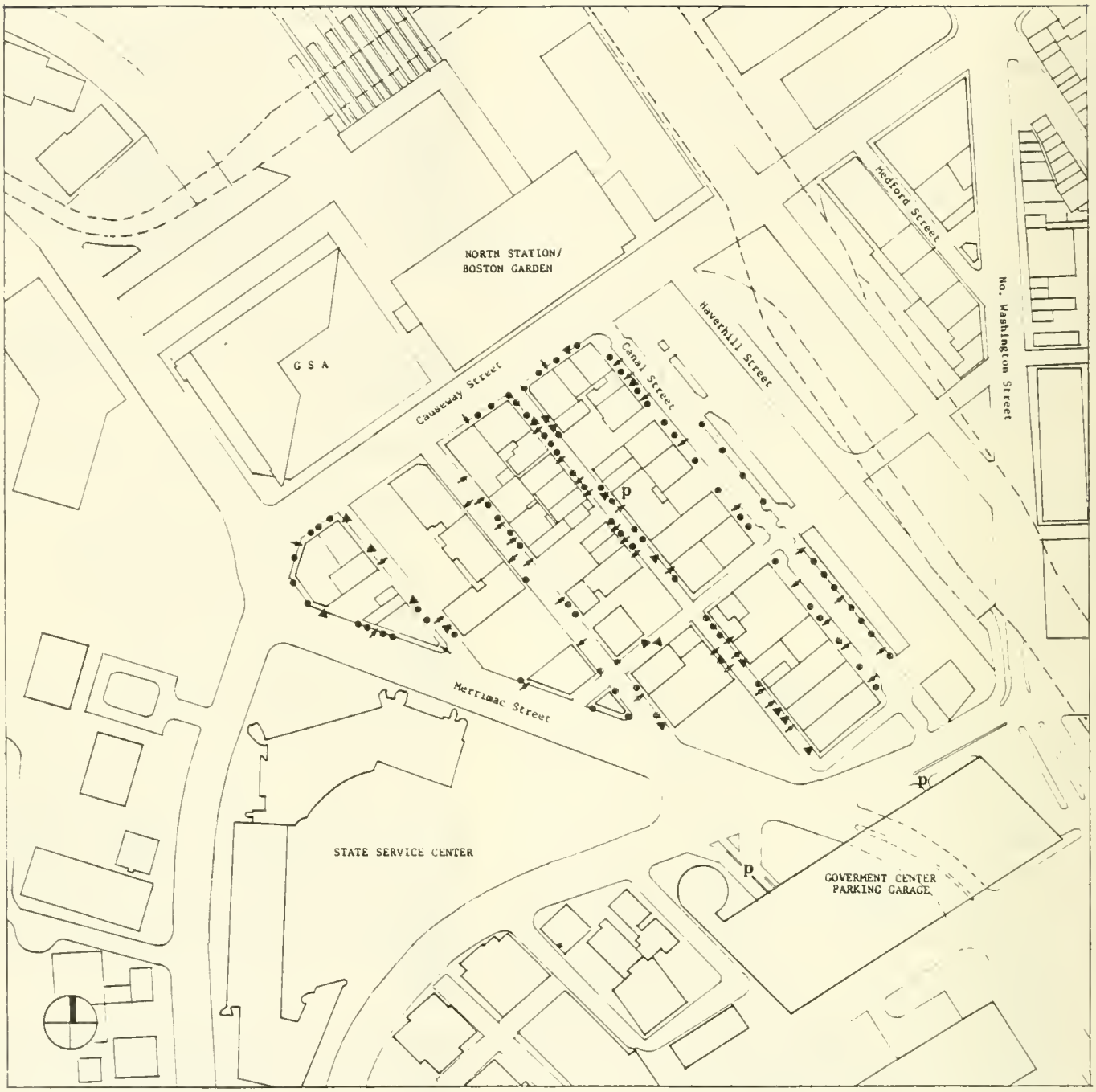
Diversity of Building Sizes -- in the Bulfinch Triangle district, the land and building increment allowed many buildings to be built on a single block (as many at 15, with several vacant parcels on a 160' x 700' block). With many interests involved in the composition of a single block, buildings were built to house large and small companies. There are thus a variety of building sizes in terms of height and street frontage. This yields a wide range of building heights, frontage dimensions, facade materials, colors, and styles.

Consistent Scale of Building Frontages -- There is an order of magnitude for the number of feet along the street that any one building occupies. The narrowest building is about 25 feet wide and the widest is 125 feet. This range establishes a comfortable scale and rhythm along the streets of the district, and prevents monotony by allowing several buildings to front along any one block of a street.

Building Access Patterns -- The numerous buildings along any one street which result from the relatively small land and



Building Frontage



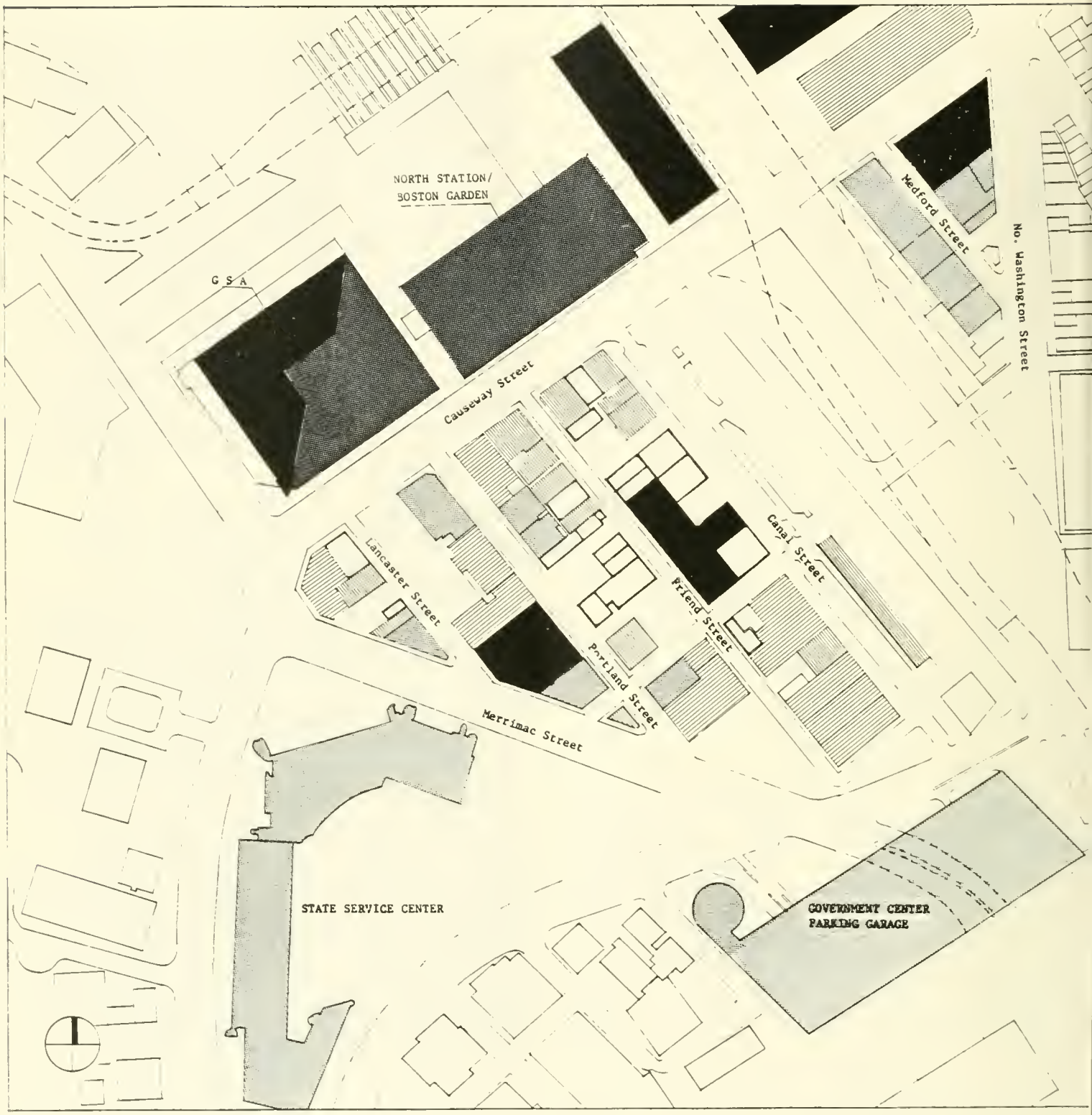
Access Points

- Upper Lever Access
- Service Access
- Ground Level Use (Front Door)

building increment in the district tend to present many doors to the street, both for ground level and upper level uses. The number of doorways and concentrations of them reveal areas of activity or potential activity. Canal and Causeway Streets and the northern portion of Friend Streets have the most activity. Along Causeway Street two nearby renovated buildings and the Lancaster Street property could complete the pattern of ground level uses. When the GSA building is occupied with 4000 employees, that frontage will be quite valuable. It is in the interest of property owner as well as employees and the general public to make streets active and pleasant, to provide needed services, and to enhance the quality of the district as a whole.

Because the Bulfinch Triangle's street pattern lacks an alley network, service access occurs along the street. Consequently most buildings have both retail uses and service bays at the ground level. Therefore, except for Canal Street and Causeway Street, an ambiguity exists as to whether streets are of an "alley-like" character or a "retail street-like" character. This ambiguity is an inherent attribute of the district and retail uses may appropriately co-exist beside service bays.

Access to upper level uses from the street, with one minor exception, never occurs at street intersections. Access to stairs and elevator lobbies generally occurs in a middle bay of a facade, or at the end bay away from the corner. Corner locations tend to be reserved for retail uses to capitalize on the concentration of movement and visibility afforded at intersections.



Building Heights

- 95′ +
- 85′ - 95′
- 75′ - 85′
- 65′ - 75′
- 50′ - 60′
- under 45′

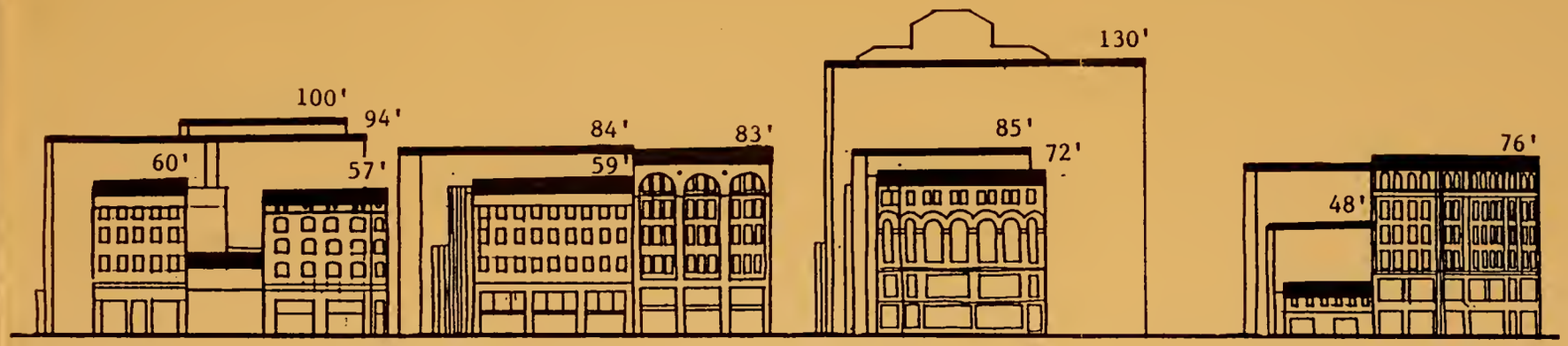
The Bulfinch Triangle is a district with no uniform cornice line.

Variety of Building Heights -- One of the most apparent qualities of the district is the range of building heights among buildings which "contribute to the character of the district". They range from 35' to 100', and the new 101 Merrimac proposal reaches a height of 130'. So there is no uniform cornice line anywhere in the district. In fact, juxtapositions of contributing buildings with a 25 foot height or greater difference are not unusual.

One story difference

Three story difference

Five story difference



Causeway Street

Lancaster Street

Irregular Cornice Lines

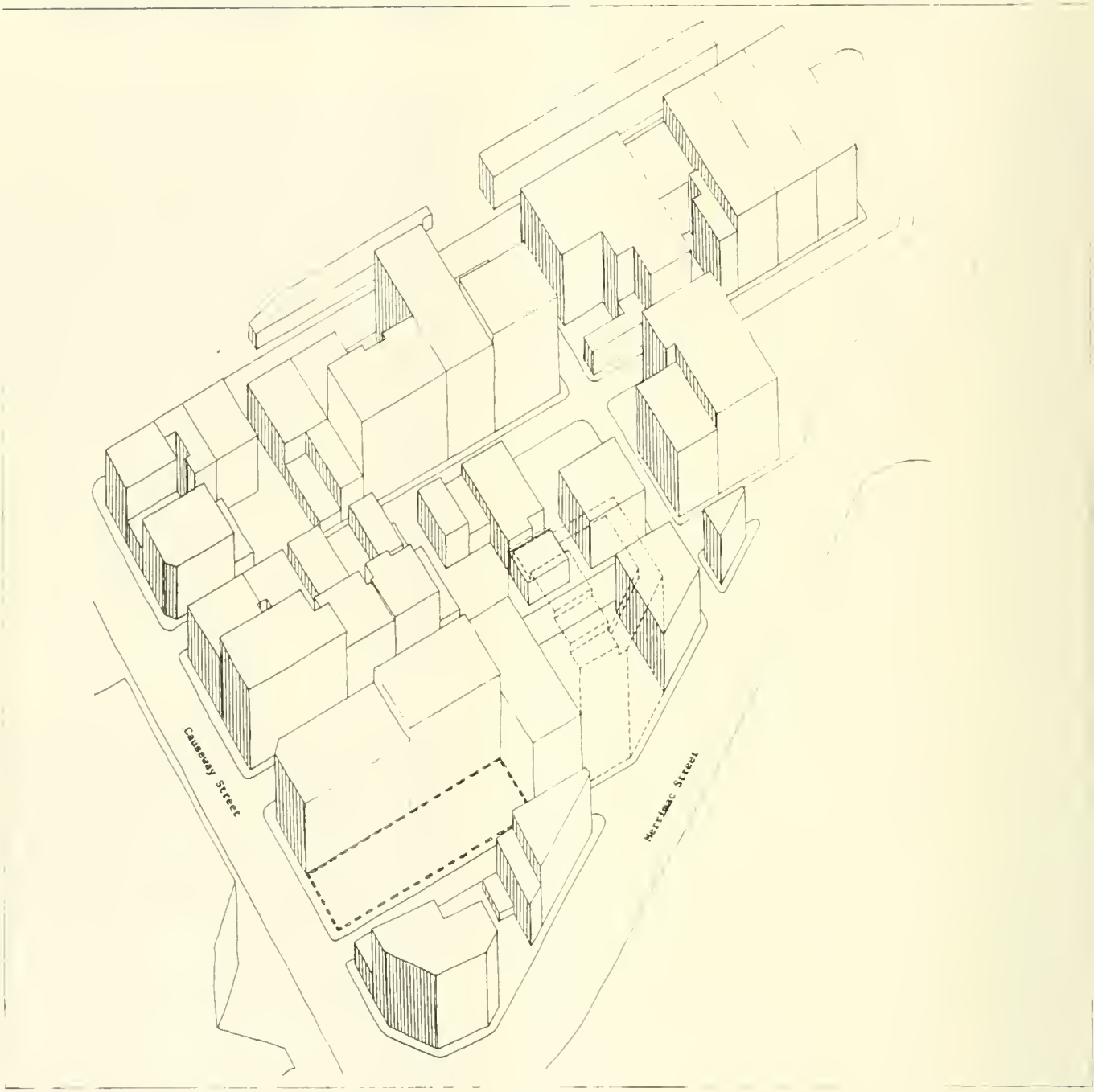
Characteristics of the Parts: Elements and Composition

The major individual buildings of the Bulfinch Triangle district are designed according to relatively clear-cut compositional rules which should be considered in the design of new buildings in the district. The result of the addition of individual buildings, composed in a similar manner yet differing in terms of style, material, color and height, is a rich and complex street wall which defines public space and serves as the public face of private enterprise. The portion of this street wall that any one building presents to the public realm (a street or square) is the facade. The facade serves both to present an image of private solidity, integrity, and even beauty, while its participation in a collective composition (the street wall) demonstrates the good faith of the private sector in the overall public framework of services and amenities which makes urban life possible.

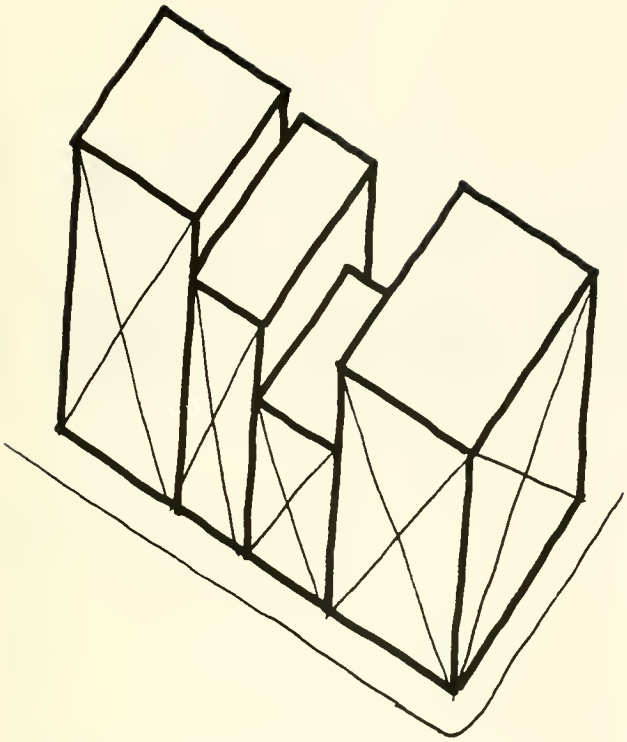
As discussed earlier, there is a clear and distinctive relationship between prominent public institutions, which serve as focal points, and private structures, which collectively define streets and open spaces. This section will address the characteristics and design principles of the individual parts which together constitute this district's particular collective "fabric".

1. Classical Composition

Throughout the Bulfinch Triangle district, major buildings (3 stories and larger) are designed according to classical principles of composition which dominated urban building design from 19th through the first half of this century. The most fundamental of these principles is the inextricable relationship between the massing of the building and its facade design; that is, the building mass itself defines the surface upon which the facade is composed. This direct correlation between building mass and street facade is evident in an aerial view of the district,



Volumetric Character



The facade surface should be inextricably related to the building's massing.

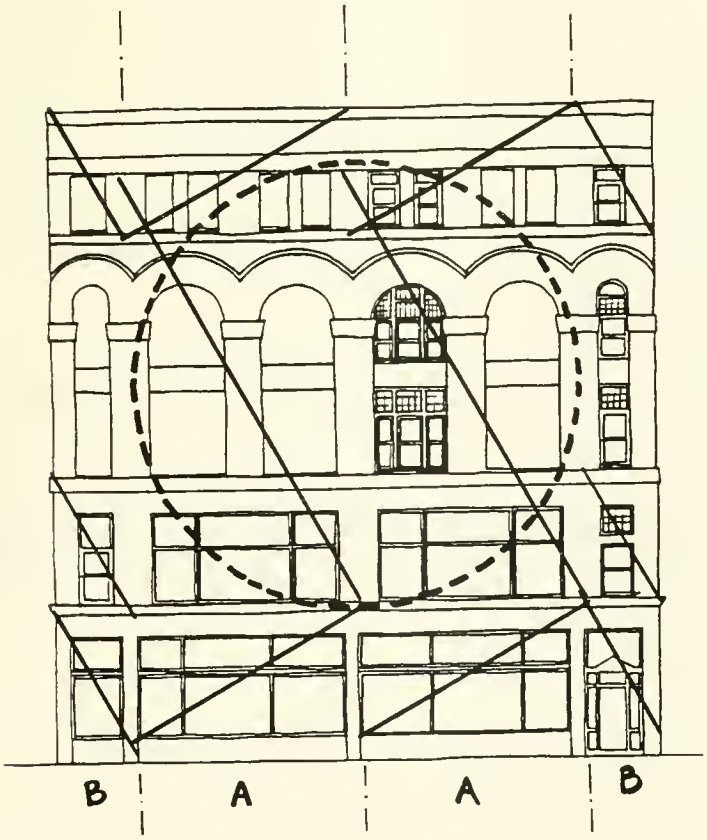
depths. This results in a distinctive volumetric character. Where the surface of these cubic volumes face a public street, a facade is composed upon its entire area.

A second principle is the notion of a building as having three distinct horizontal zones, which create a transition from earth to sky. This is known as "tripartite" composition. The lower zone, the base, relates to the earth and tends to be articulated as having considerable weight and thickness. The middle zone serves as a transition from ground to the crown of the building, is the largest and most repetitious of the three zones, and is articulated to read as a support for the upper zone. The uppermost zone, the top, serves to cap the building and touch the sky. It has a horizontal emphasis, yet corresponds to the vertical bay system, to be discussed next.

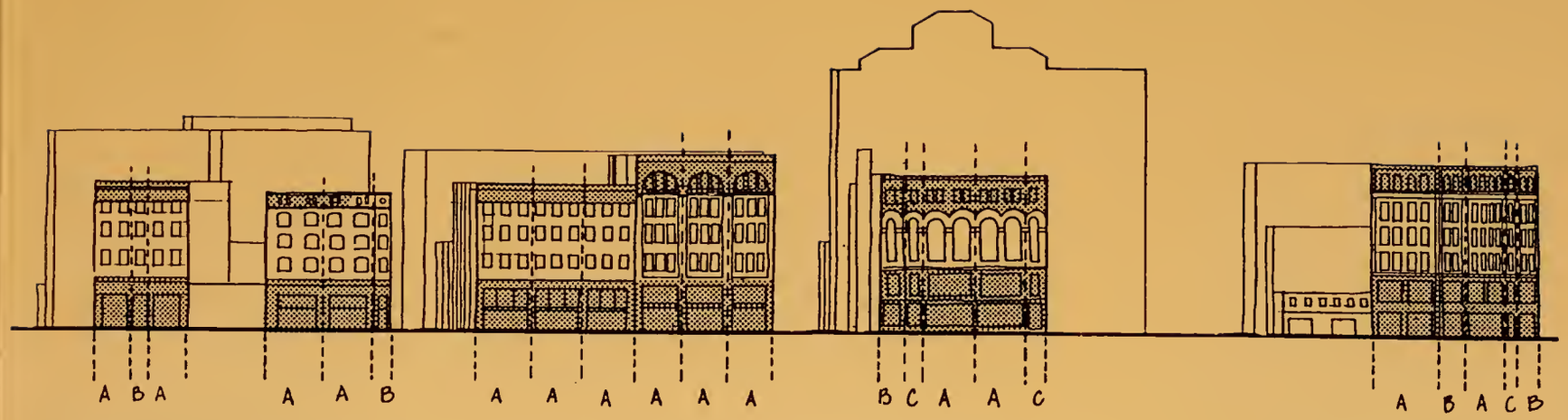
The third principle is the composition of a facade as a rhythmic system or sequence of vertical bays which form a complete, and often complex, symmetry. The use of a vertical proportional system to compose a facade and structure the divisions and openings so that they relate in a rational, complete manner, is a common characteristic of classical composition prevalent in the buildings of this distict. Regulating lines are the compositional tool in such a system.

2. How Large Buildings Relate to Smaller Ones

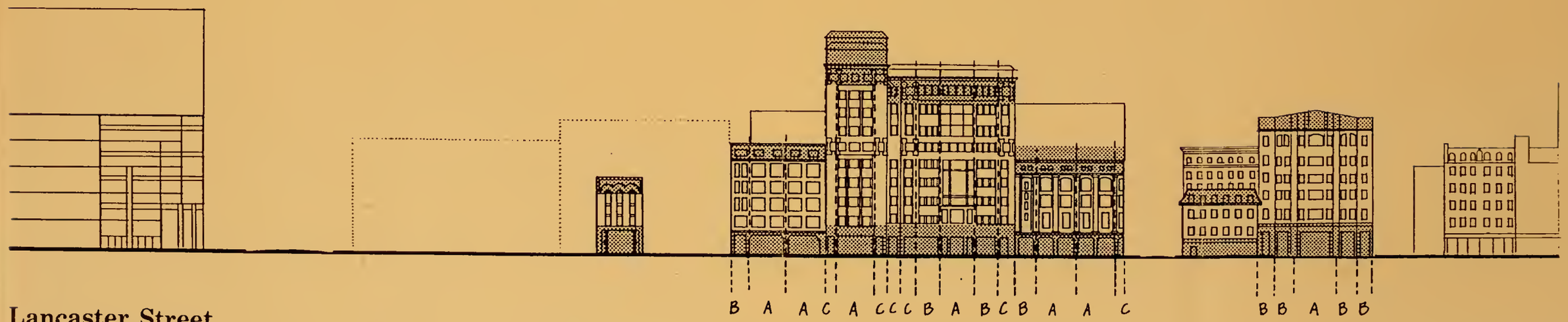
On the Lancaster Street property a small building is to be retained and incorporated into the new project. This situation raises the important and topical issue of how to achieve this incorporation without compromising the integrity of both the old building and the new building.



Facades in the district are typically composed utilizing the golden rectangle as a proportional system. Pictured is 81-87 Causeway Street at Portland Street.

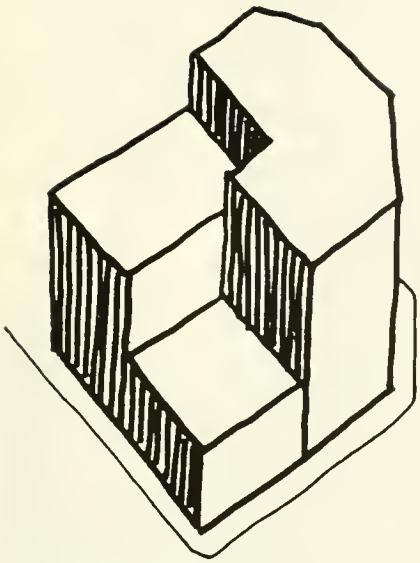


Causeway Street

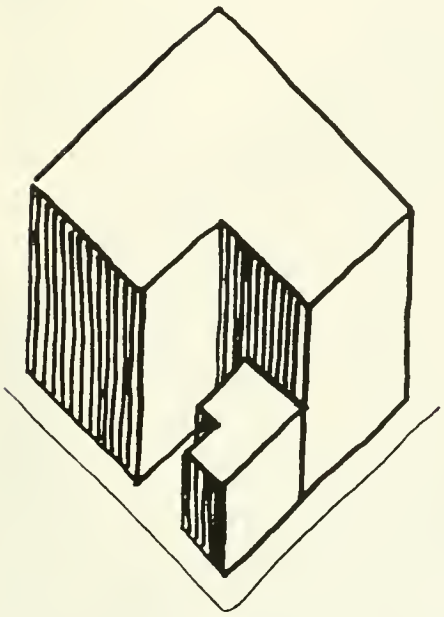


Lancaster Street

Facades: Street Rhythm and Tripartite Composition



The Lockhart Building.



The Rapids Furniture Building.

The key to the resolution of this problem emerges from the fundamental principle that the facade is inextricably related to the massing of the building. It is necessary to maintain the volumetric integrity of the smaller building, without engulfing it or otherwise overwhelming it. The situation of a building with a large footprint relating to a smaller building without compromising its volumetric integrity can, in fact, be found within the district. The Rapids Building (Canal, Traverse, and Friend Streets) and the Lockhart Building (Merrimac and Causeway Streets) both wrap around smaller buildings on two sides, roughly creating an "L" form. (see illustrations). This has implications for the similar situation on the Lancaster Street property. It means that a substantial setback must occur over the existing 25 Lancaster Street building so that the perception of it as an inhabitable architectonic volume is mantained.

3. Massing and Building Frontage

The frontage of the Lancaster Street property is longer (243') by far than the longest building with street frontage in the district (125'). A building designed with a unified mass and/or facade over the entire 243 feet, regardless of material, detailing, or setbacks, would be out of scale with the district. It is necessary to break the overall mass of a proposed building into two or three smaller volumes whose street frontage dimensions are more characteristic of buildings found in the district.

4. Setbacks

If it is desirable for a new building on Lancaster Street to setback, it is important that set-back elements are conceived as part of the overall massing and facade design of the building. A good example is the Ritz Carlton Hotel on Arlington Street. It's design is very similar to buildings in the Bulfinch Triangle, incorporating a rhythmic bay system, vertical proportional system and

The Ritz Carlton Hotel: Set back element is part of the volumetric idea of the building.

From the street, the set back element disappears.

From a distance, the shape of the set back portion enhances the building's skyline profile.

tripartite (base, middle, and top) composition. But its set-back portion, the penthouse, is designed as a mass on top of a larger mass, which together create a coherent profile when viewed from a distance. The setback is also deep enough so that the upper volume is not visible from the street below, thus reducing the perceived height of the building.

Another approach to building setbacks within a general classical order can be seen in the New England Life Building. Here the corners are set-back and sculpturally manipulated to enhance a view from the street. The setback dimension, which is a manipulation of the massing, logically has an important impact on the composition of the facade on Newbury Street, where two end bays are created by the dimension of the setback, framing the large, central bay.

New England Life Building.

399 Boylston Street: the stage setback effect.

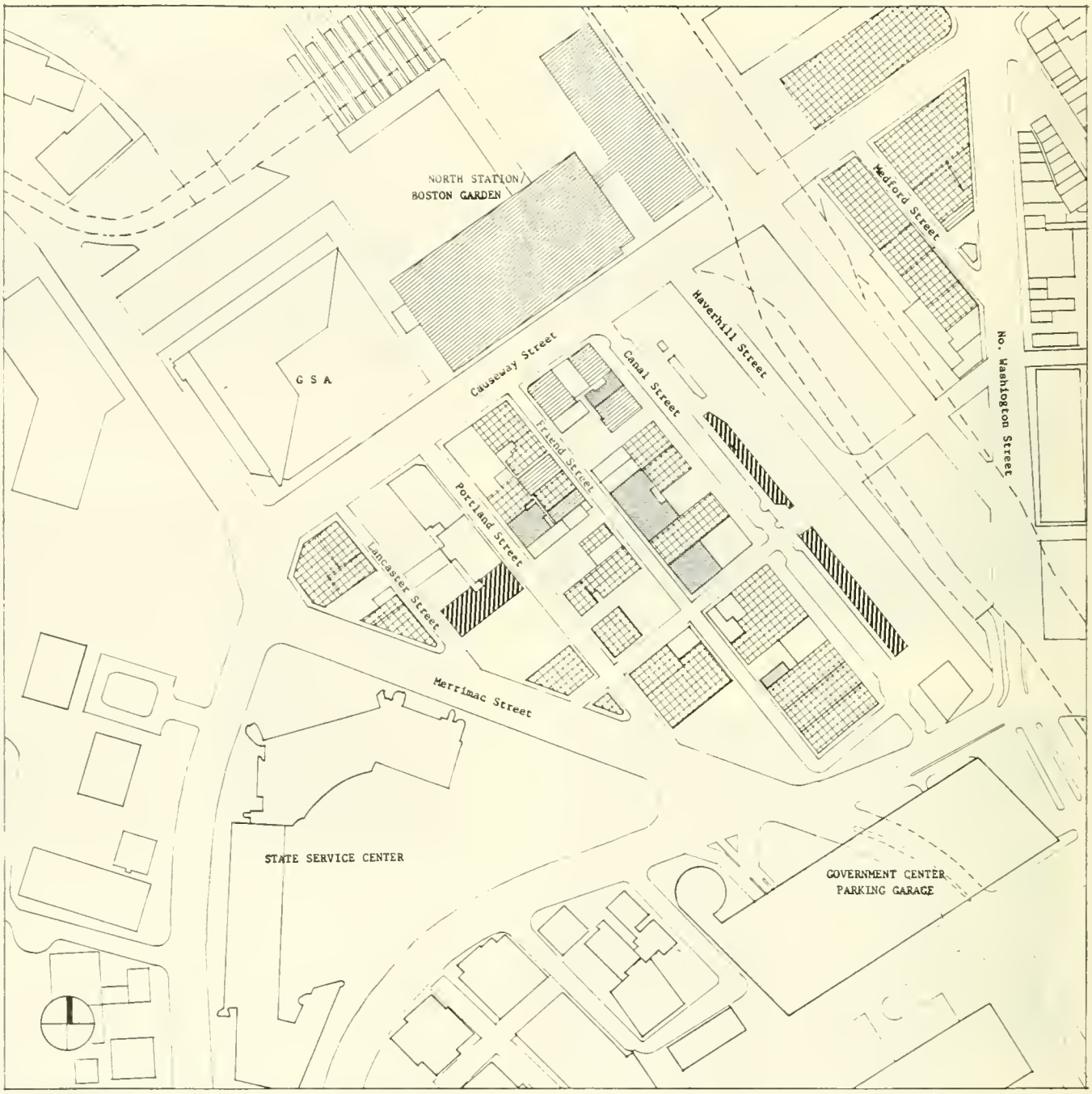
An example of what would be inappropriate to the Bulfinch Triangle is the 399 Boylston Building. A masonry facade is created which is superficially sympathetic with the existing buildings on the street, but this facade does not correspond with the massing of the building. The entire upper portion of the mass of the building above the masonry facade is set-back minimally and sheathed in reflective glass. The assumption is that reflective glass will read as invisible, in the hope that no one will notice that the building is bigger than it should be. But reflective glass does not read as invisible. The unintentional effect of the building as viewed on the skyline and as one walks down Boylston Street is that of a thin brick skin partially wrapping a larger glass box. This effect occurs because the designers did not consider the view of the building in perspective, nor did they understand the importance of a facade corresponding with the massing of a building.

Reflective glass is not invisible.

Just across the street from 399 Boylston is a small but elegantly proportioned building, which uses glass in a far more satisfying way. A classical facade is topped by a transparent greenhouse element which is designed in proportion with the entire facade. This element does not try to deny its own existence, and in fact displays the internal activities of the building to the street. Although this is technically not a setback, it does fulfill one of the purposes of setbacks as a device to minimize the perceived height of a building.

Skyline profile: a glass cube in a thin brick box.

Louis' on Boylston Street: an elegant use of glass.



Facade Colors and Materials

- Tan brick or stucco
- White terra cotta or granite
- Red brick
- Red brick and brownstone trim
- Yellow brick

5. Variety of Color and Building Materials

The Bulfinch Triangle is in no way a "red brick district". Although red brick is a common building material, it is not always used as a primary material on facades.

Many buildings have yellow or tan brick on their facades while one on Portland Street is clad in white granite and another on Canal Street is made of white terra cotta. Even among red brick buildings there are a variety of trim materials used such as granite, brownstone, terra cotta and marble.

Details play an important role in a building's facade. Elements such as window frames and mullions, spandrels, sills, headers, cornices, pilasters, etc. provide relief in a flat surface, and color and textural contrast to the primary materials of a facade. One recently completed eight story building on Friend Street has a tan stucco external finish and wide bays of inoperable bronze glass. The overall poor quality of the materials and craftsmanship make the building look second rate among its better crafted and more substantial-looking neighbors.

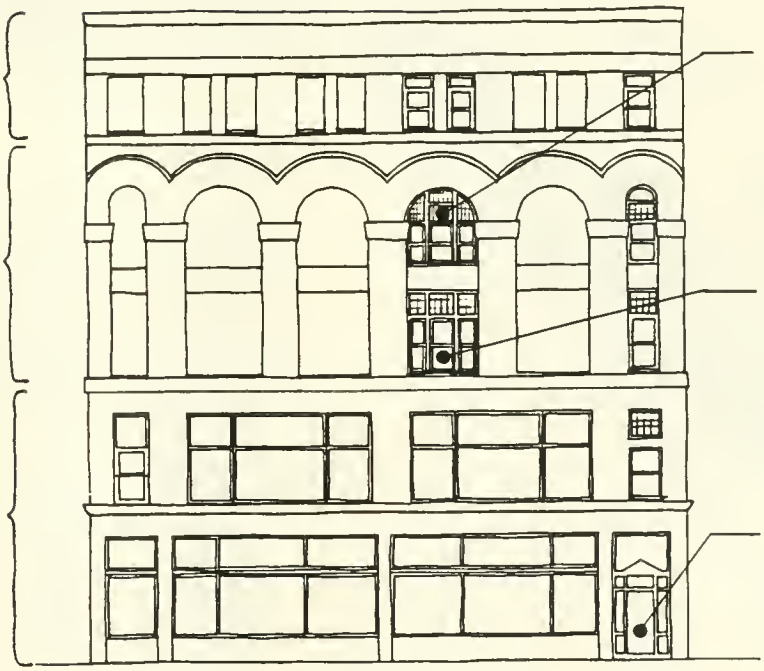
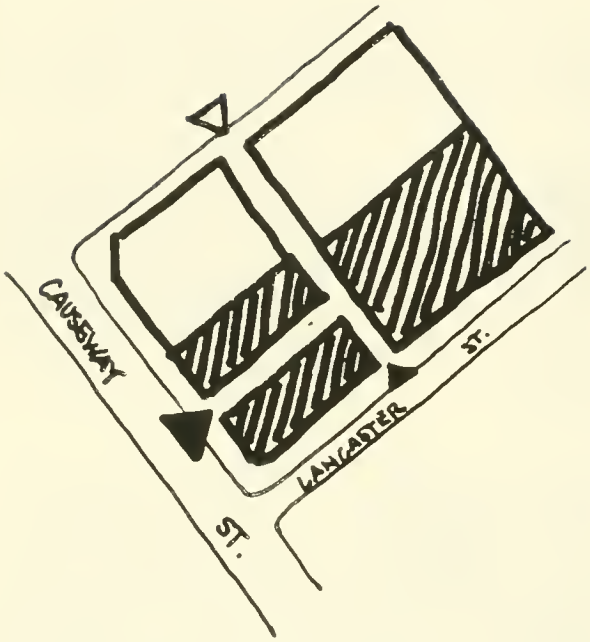
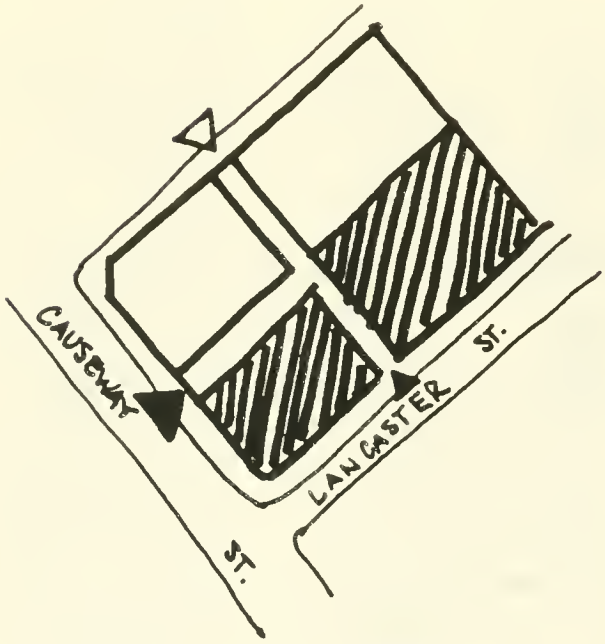


Illustration #7: Annotated Elevation

Design Criteria



Acceptable Causeway Street entrance.



Preferred Causeway Street entrance.

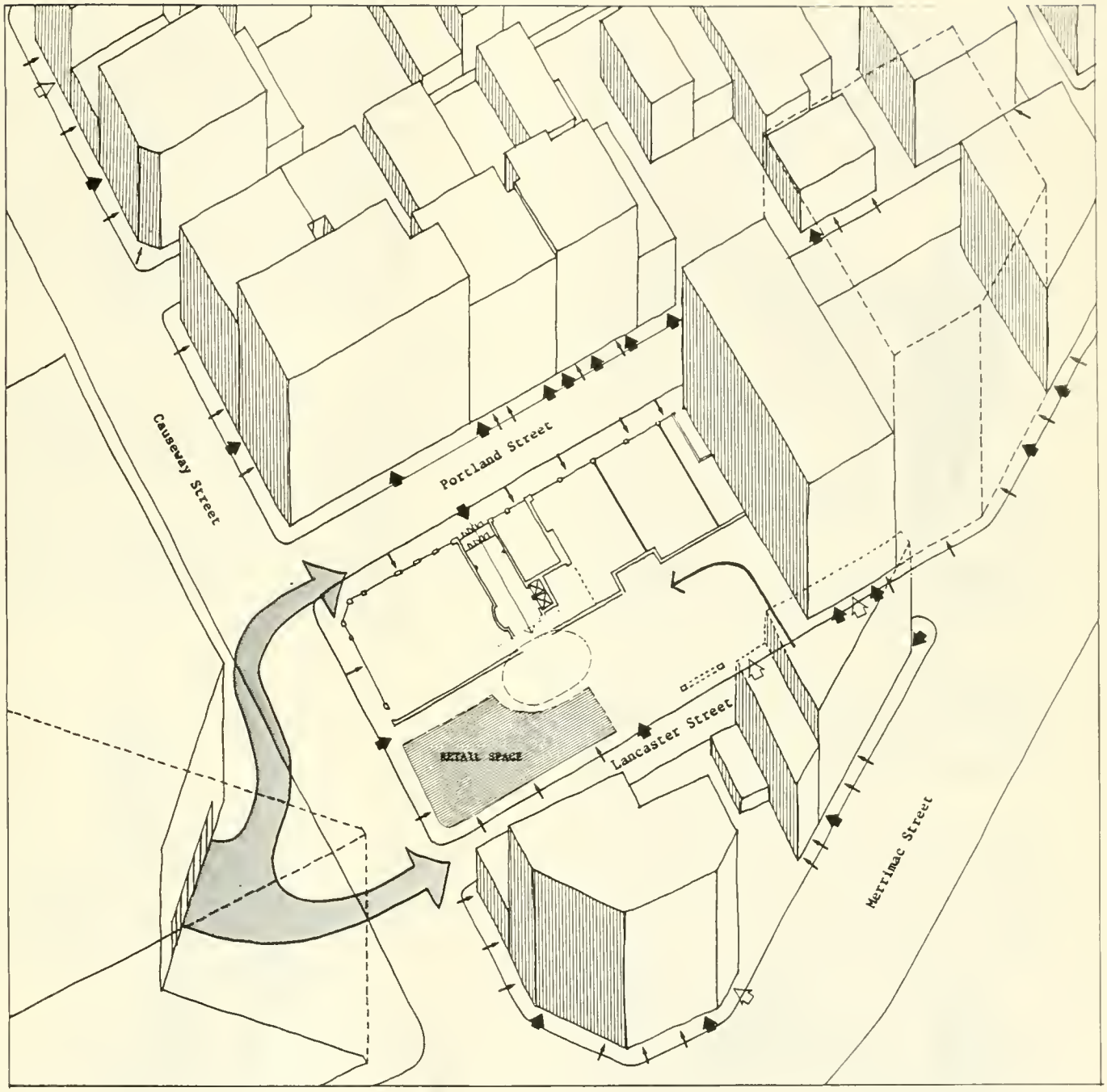
The purpose of these design criteria is to translate the district analysis into a design approach and parti for a new building appropriate for its location in the Bulfinch Triangle. In terms of its role in the overall fabric of the district, the new building on Lancaster Street should be appropriate for its role as a street wall building, and should take cues from existing street wall buildings in terms of how they "fit-in" collectively; and how they distinguish themselves individually.

Collectively, the buildings in the district adhere to a convention of simple, volumetric massing, and a uniform built-to line along the street. While massing and definition of street space are utterly conventional, individual buildings distinguish themselves through facade articulation; style, material, color, scale, and detail. The public image and distinguishing characteristics of the new Lancaster Street building should come from the way the street wall surface is designed and articulated, and from strong, coherently proportioned massing.

The organizational criteria are designed to ensure that the new building will function well within, and enhance the patterns of use and access of, the Bulfinch Triangle district.

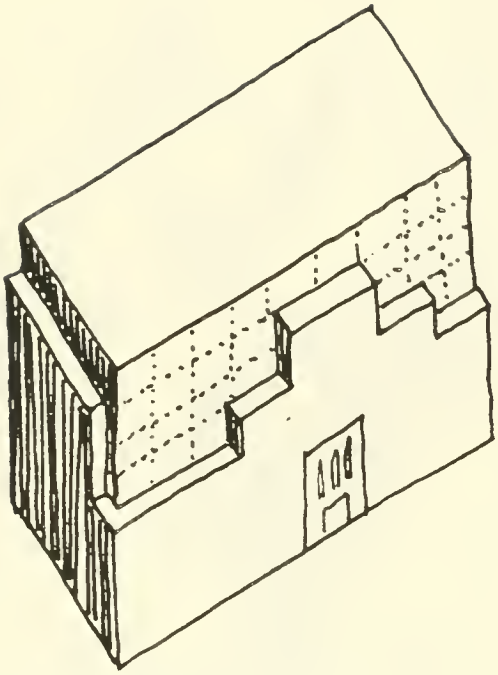
<u>Organization</u>

1. Access to elevator lobbies and office space should occur away from the corner of Causeway and Lancaster Streets. The corner should be reserved for retail use. Although it would be acceptable to have the lobby entrance on Causeway Street in the middle of the facade, it would be more convenient, for leasing purposes, to have a single, large space with wide frontage on Causeway Street. This would be better than having two narrow and deep rental spaces on either side of the entrance.



Organization

- ♠ Entrance for Upper Level Uses
- ⇧ Service Access
- ↑ Ground Level Use
- ⇑ Parking Access

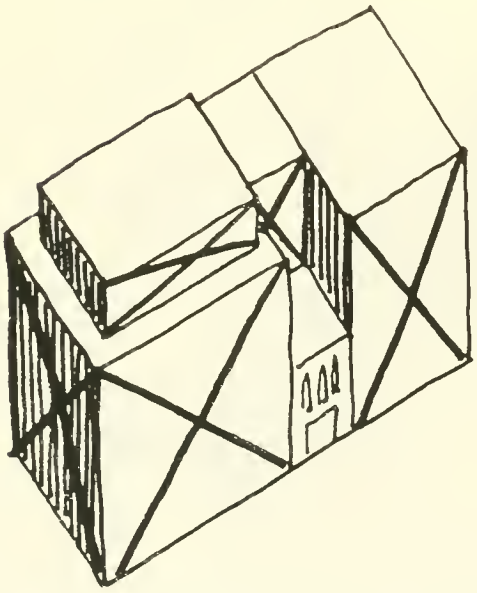


Unacceptable: Facade design unrelated to the building's massing.

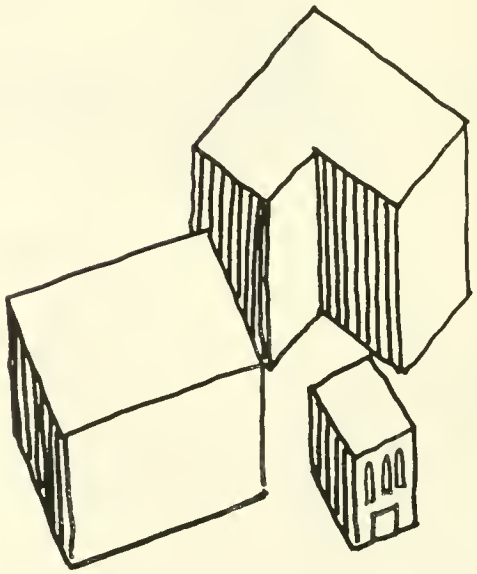
2. Service access should be located at the southern end of the site. Basement parking access, to maximize space for ramping, should be at the southernmost edge, with the loading dock on the north side of that. The remainder of ground floor street frontage should be reserved for a Lancaster Street entrance to the new and existing elevator cores. Retail use should extend to the corner of Causeway Street.

Massing

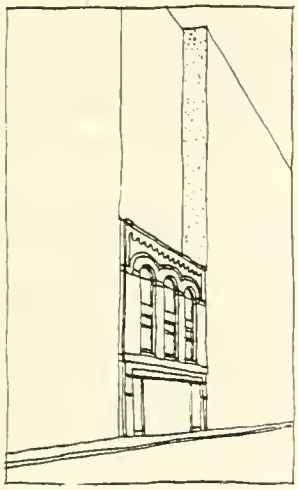
1. Facade design and building massing should be inextricably related; that is, the profile of the building mass which is presented to the street must define the surface upon which the entire facade is designed. This criterion is intended to prevent facades which read as two-dimensional stage sets.



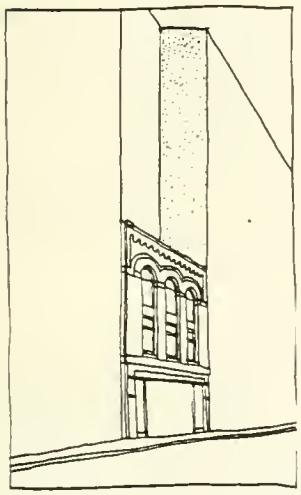
Acceptable: Facade surface defined by the building's massing.



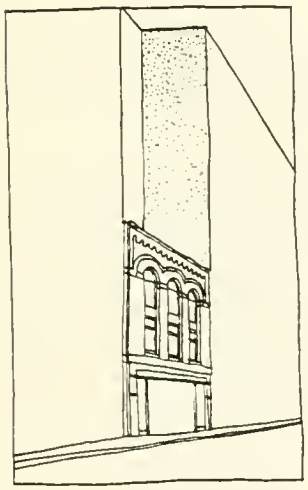
The new building thought of as three volumes.



Inadequate set back causes facade to read as a "prop". Illustrated is a 10' set back.



Absolute minimum acceptable set back: 20'.



Preferred set back: 25' - 30'.

2. The new building should be conceived as three, volumes which have been assembled on the site. This is recommended to preserve the rhythm and scale of streets, and to allow the new project to fit in with the range of building sizes in the district.

3. As discussed in part 2 of Characteristics of the Parts, a substantial setback should be maintained above the existing three-story building on Lancaster Street. The actual dimension of this "substantial" setback should be large enough to allow the retained portion of the building to read as a believeable and inhabitable architectural volume. This would allow the building to contribute to the overall composition of the new building as a viable third volume, rather than as a subordinated scenographic element.

   So the dimension for an appropriate setback must be based on a minimum dimension for a viable urban building and on the visual perception of the building as a significant volume in the new composition.
   With a setback of ten feet or less, the retained portion of the building could only read as a thin brick prop on Lancaster Street. Between ten and 20 feet it would read as an unviable remnant of a larger building. When the setback reaches 20 feet, the retained portion of the building begins to read as a believable, and inhabitable building which could function alone if it were not connected to a larger building. As the setback increases beyond this 20 foot dimension, the believability of the building as a viable and contributing volume in the new compositon would be enhanced. Therefore, an absolute minimum dimension for this setback is 20 feet, while a preferred dimension would range between 25 and 30 feet.

4. Contrasting materials, particularly reflective glass curtain walls, should not be used to "minimize" the bulk of a building whose massing is inherently unsympathetic to its context.

5. Setbacks should be an integral part of the general massing and compositional idea of the building. Even if a setback portion of the building is not visible from the street, it will be visible from a distance and should be designed with this in mind.

Height

1. The height of the building elements should vary to reinforce the notion of the new project being composed as three distinct volumes. Varying building heights are extremely important in preventing in the large site footprint from becoming a single rectangular volume. Each new volume should have a cornice height that is different from the other new volume and existing buildings.

2. A 10 story maximum height is recommended, with other elements in a range from 8-9 stories, depending on architectural treatment. This will enable an approppriate volumetric height relationship with 200 Portland Street and with the nearby proposed 101 Merrimac Street building.

Composition

1. Tripartite composition (base, middle, and top) should be used in the design of the facades.

2. The vertical bay rhythm along Lancaster and Causeway Streets should be continued and reinforced.

3. A proportional system, such as the "golden rectangle" should be utilized as a compositional tool for the desing of facades.

Materials

1. Primary surface materials should be chosen to be in sympathy with the masonry construction of the district. Brick, glazed brick, brownstone, limestone, granite, marble, and terra cotta are acceptable materials.

2. Aside from a primary surface material, secondary materials should be included on the facades of the new buildings for trim, cornices, sills, headers, ornament, or other details of the building.

3. A finer scale of material should be used to articulate glass or infill elements on the facade: window frames, sashes, spandrels, mullions, etc.

4. The colors of each of the three types of facade materials should be coordinated to work harmoniously while accentuating their role in the design hierarchy of the facade. The new vocabulary need not replicate any particular combination existing in the district. The range of color in the district is such that carefully chosen new colors could be introduced.

Massing Strategy

Many approaches would be workable on this site and in conformance with the above principles. The accompanying diagrammatic street elevations show three massing strategies which can emerge from the preceeding criteria. These show the outline of building mass using a height range from 8-10 stories. It should be noted that detailed architectural design within any of these concepts will incorporate aspects such as setbacks, variations in cornice lines, use of glazing, and fenestration which will modify the above concepts.

The principal issues of massing composition revolve around the attitude the new building will express toward Causeway Street, the Government Services Administration directly across the street, and the new 101 Merrimac Street building which has recently been approved by the Boston Redevelopment Authority.

Alternative One illustrates a "U" shaped building surrounding the existing three story structure on Lancaster Street with a second, cubic volume at the corner of Causeway and Lancaster Streets. The taller mass is placed away from Causeway Street to act as a transition to the taller 101 Merrimac building.

Alternative Two consists of a rectangular volume and an "L" shaped volume which interlock around the existing three story building. The taller mass is again placed away from Causeway Street toward the new 101 Merrimac Street building. An advantage to this approach is that the existing building does not read as being surrounded by a new, larger building as in Alternative One's "U" shaped idea.

Alternative Three takes the same "L" shape idea as in Alternative Two, but reverses the position of the taller volume, which is now placed on Causeway Street. This creates a more assertive image along Causeway Street as a response to the significant height and bulk of the new GSA building.

Causeway Street

Lancaster Street

Alternative One

Causeway Street

Lancaster Street

Alternative Two

Causeway Street

Lancaster Street

Alternative Three

'264

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